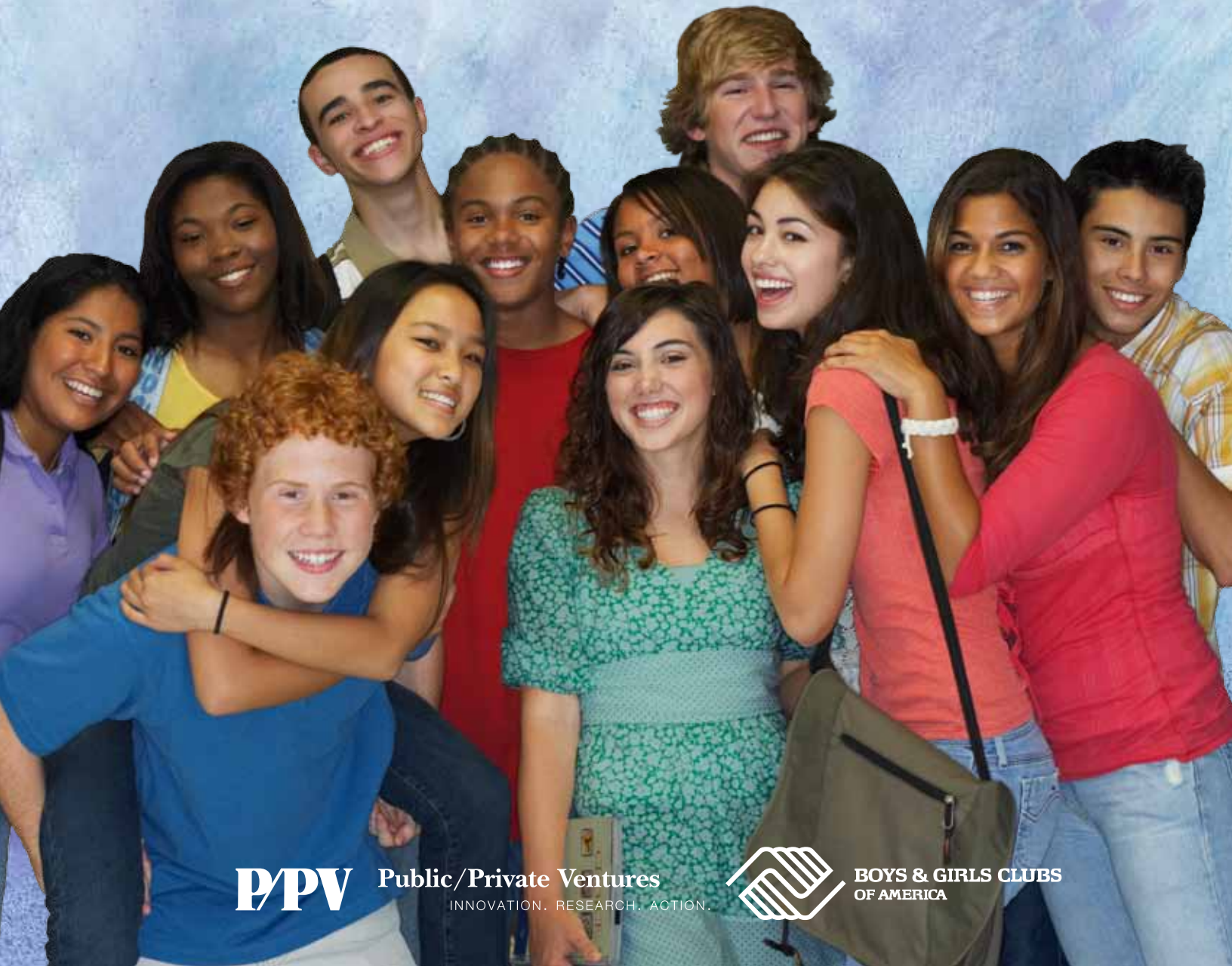


Making Every Day Count:

Boys & Girls Clubs' Role in Promoting Positive Outcomes for Teens

Amy Arbreton
with Molly Bradshaw,
Jessica Sheldon
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Executive Summary



Public/Private Ventures

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OF AMERICA

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- Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater San Diego, Linda Vista Club
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Omaha, South Omaha Boys & Girls Club
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- Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester
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ut-of-school time can be ripe with positive opportunities for teens. The key is creating settings and options that are attractive to them and help sustain their participation in ways that promote healthy development. With their diversity of programs and opportunities, Boys & Girls Clubs provide a powerful setting for learning more about how to effectively serve teens and, ultimately, what levels of attendance may be necessary to promote positive outcomes.

In 2005, at the request of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) launched a national longitudinal study of Club participants to test the degree to which teens' overall experiences there might prove to be more than the sum of Clubs' programmatic parts. Because many of the prior evaluations of Clubs had focused on studying the targeted outcomes of discrete Club programs, it seemed possible that they had missed the bigger picture of experiences that the Clubs offer their members and their potential for influencing a larger and broader array of outcomes than had previously been explored.

Thus, the goal of P/PV's evaluation was to take that broader look at "the whole club experience" in order to more fully document its potential. In particular, we set out to examine how Club participation is related to youth's positive and healthy development in the three outcome areas Boys & Girls Clubs of America has established as core to meeting its mission: good character and citizenship, academic success and healthy lifestyles. The final report, the third in a series of reports from the evaluation,¹ and the subject of this executive summary, examines how the youth in the study changed over time in these three outcome areas, and the relationship between levels of participation and outcomes.

The Clubs' Approach to Serving Teens

The mission of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America is to "enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens." Open to children and youth aged 6 to 18, the Clubs aim to provide a safe place for enjoying ongoing relationships and life-enhancing programs that offer character development, hope and opportunity.

Clubs attempt to provide the same supports and opportunities to their teen participants as to younger youth, albeit through a modified approach that is designed to be tailored for teens' needs and interests. The Clubs' approach to serving teens is based on:

- **A strong grounding in how to effectively work with teens.** Club staff recognize that teens want and need more flexibility and different offerings than the younger youth that Clubs serve, and they build their programming to reflect their understanding of these differences.
- **A breadth of activities.** Clubs offer formal programs and activities across broad program areas, with the intention of drawing in teens with different interests and exposing them to new activities that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to experience.
- **An emphasis on leadership.** This includes both specific leadership workshops and opportunities for teens to get involved in leadership roles, such as serving as role models to younger youth, helping to make decisions about Club offerings and serving on teen councils.
- **A focus on having staff develop relationships with the teens.** Because of the emphasis on relationship-building, the Clubs provide staff with many opportunities to talk and interact with youth, including informal interactions where staff can take advantage of "teachable moments."
- **Time for teens to just "hang out" with peers.** Teens come to the Club with friends and to be with friends, and they want and need time to

socialize. The structure of the Clubs allows for youth to hang out, to participate in activities and to socialize within and between activities.

- **A space of their own, in which teens can relax and socialize.** These teen-only areas, apart from the younger children, range from a single room with televisions, computers and couches to large facilities (separate from the main Clubs) that have computer areas, dance studios and other multipurpose rooms.

Given the increasing demands on teens' time, Clubs also try to make these opportunities as accessible as possible by being open during afternoons and evenings during the school year (and at some Clubs, on weekends) and offering extended hours during school vacations. Enrollment is open to all youth; there are no mandates on the number of days or hours a teen must participate; and there is typically a low yearly membership fee, ranging from about \$2 to about \$10 per year.

Study Design

Seventh- and eighth-grade Club participants from 10 Clubs across the country were recruited to be in the study.² Focusing on youth in these grades allowed us to follow them during the critical period of their transition to high school, when even those students who have done relatively well in middle school face challenges that can derail them. As preteens gain independence, they have more discretionary time and more choices about risks, from crime to drugs and alcohol to sexual activity. The path they take affects every aspect of their development—including their academic achievement and physical and emotional health—and frequently carries consequences well into adulthood.³ We hypothesized that the Clubs may provide important continuity during this transition, as well as supports that may help keep youth engaged in both school and positive out-of-school-time activities.

The 10 Clubs were selected based on a set of criteria that included their prior success in reaching and serving relatively large numbers of teens,⁴ location in an urban setting, and utilization of an electronic enrollment and attendance tracking system. The Clubs in the study all had strong and dedicated programming for teens, represented by separate teen space and staff who worked exclusively or primarily with teens; the participation trends and outcomes found in this study are likely representative of all Clubs that have similar programming.

The study used multiple data collection strategies:

- To learn about teens' experiences in the Clubs and how teens changed over time in the three outcome areas, *youth surveys* were conducted, starting with seventh and eighth graders (the Winter 2006 survey) and following the same teens over a 30-month period (the Spring 2008 survey) into the ninth and tenth grades. The follow-up surveys, completed with a total of 332 youth, were conducted with youth whether or not they were still participating in Clubs.
- Researchers also collected Clubs' *attendance records* for these youth over a 30-month period, in order to track their levels of participation.
- In addition, to understand more about the Clubs' approach to serving teens, researchers conducted *interviews* with staff from each of the Clubs (a total of 86 staff) and with 56 of the surveyed youth, when they were in ninth grade, to capture their perceptions of the Club after they had transitioned to high school.

To address the evaluation's overarching question, "What role do the Boys & Girls Clubs play in influencing change in teens' outcomes?" the study examines: 1) the quantitative data from surveys and attendance records to analyze the extent to which participation in the Clubs is associated with significant change over time on a series of specific outcomes in each of the three broad outcome areas, and 2) the qualitative data from interviews with

ninth graders and staff from each of the 10 Clubs to document how staff work with youth to achieve the outcomes and how youth perceive those practices.

As with all research studies, this evaluation has limitations. An important characteristic of the Clubs is that they welcome all young people who wish to attend; therefore, Clubs do not have waiting lists. In addition, on the assumption that young people need safe places where they can come as needed, Clubs have not traditionally required youth to arrive at particular times or attend particular activities. Attendance in almost all activities is voluntary: Youth can participate in some activities and not in others, at their discretion. As a result, every youth has a different experience. Given these characteristics of the Clubs, we were unable to implement the most rigorous kind of impact study—an experimental study that randomly assigns young people to either a group that attends the programs in the Clubs or a control group that does not participate, and then examines differences between the groups at the end of the study period. Doing so would have changed the very character and mission of the Clubs.⁵

Despite these challenges, there are several reasons why the positive findings from this study build a strong case for the role Boys & Girls Clubs play in teens' lives and add to our knowledge about the importance of the type of support Clubs provide at such critical junctures as the transition from middle to high school:

- The study followed a large sample of youth (422) and gathered survey data from them whether or not they continued as regular participants in the Club—or even participated at all.⁶ The response rate was 76.3 percent on the follow-up survey, which was administered approximately 30 months after baseline data were collected. Therefore, the outcomes are based on 322 youth, including those who were not involved in the Clubs after the beginning of the study. Prior studies of outcomes that have drawn conclusions based solely on youth who remain in the Clubs and are present on the day of the follow-up survey offer a more biased and narrower perspective of experiences.
- The study is able to link attendance data with survey data to examine the relationship between participation and outcomes and compare outcomes for youth with greater and less participation.⁷
- The in-depth qualitative interviews with ninth graders and staff provide data that allow for more detailed and nuanced exploration of how the Clubs achieve their goals, as well as the challenges they face.

Thus, the findings from this study provide important information about how these young people changed over time, the relationship between participation in the Clubs and the outcomes being examined, and the youth's and staff's perceptions of how the Clubs influence teens' lives.

Findings

The results of the evaluation are informative for funders and policymakers interested in supporting programs that effectively garner the types of outcomes described in this study. They are also helpful for practitioners who are interested in developing strong programs that can attract teens and engage them in positive experiences that promote healthy development. The findings address the question, “Do Boys & Girls Clubs ‘work’?”—and suggest that, on many levels, the approach that Clubs take with teens is working. The following pages summarize the findings and conclusions of the full report, which is available at www.ppv.org.

The Teens

The 322 teens followed over the two-and-a-half-year time frame of the evaluation reflect a group of youth faced with economic challenges and potentially significant life stressors that place them at risk of not achieving healthy outcomes. The teens in the sample are ethnically and racially diverse and primarily low-income, similar to the overall population served by Clubs nationwide. The youth, a majority of whom had been involved in the Club for more

than two years at the time the study began, typically lived relatively close to the Club where they participated. On the baseline survey in Winter 2006, they tended to report performing fairly well in school and having engaged in few risk behaviors. Thus, the study illuminates the extent to which the Clubs support these youth in maintaining a positive trajectory and keep them out of many of the troubles that begin to surface as youth move into high school.

Teens' Participation and Engagement

Survey and attendance data reveal a picture of teens who go to Clubs relatively frequently, even as they transition from middle to high school; who feel safer at the Clubs than they do in other places where they spend time; and who feel engaged by the Clubs' activities, opportunities and interpersonal relationships. These elements come together to support the outcomes Clubs strive to achieve.

Attendance data indicate a relatively regular group of Club attendees; these data also show that attendance lessens as youth move from middle school to high school. Importantly, even those who attend other out-of-school-time activities feel connected to the Club. Over the 30 months of the study, approximately half the youth (52 percent) attended more than 122 days (roughly once a week), with almost a third (30 percent) attending 244 or more days (roughly two to three times a week) and close to 13 percent attending 366 or more days (roughly 3 to 4 days per week). Although the frequency of attendance was significantly lower, on average, for the youth when they reached the ninth and tenth grades (11.8 days from January to March 2008, compared to 25.1 days from January to March 2006—when these youth were in the seventh and eighth grades), older youth were still attending about one day a week on average, compared with about two days per week when they were younger. About two thirds (67 percent) reported having been to a Club in the four months prior to the final survey, with 86 percent indicating they plan to go back to a Club, even if they have not been in a while.

Different teens reported using the Club in different ways: For some youth, their only out-of-school activities were at the Club, while many combined their Club activities with other pastimes. A common theme described by participants was that, regardless of how much they used the Club, they felt connected to the Club and felt that even if they were not using it right now, they could go back.

Four factors seemed most significant in contributing to sustained teen attendance. Our findings indicate that teens were likely to participate with greater frequency during the transition from middle to high school if: 1) the Clubs fully engaged them in a variety of activities; 2) their friends came to the Club; 3) they were involved in leadership roles there; and 4) they had first become involved in the Clubs as preteens or even younger.

Clubs use an intentional approach to working with teens and keeping them involved. The Clubs engaged teens by offering a broad array of programming and other opportunities, along with time and a place to hang out with friends, other positive peers and supportive adults. All of the Clubs in the study have a separate space for teens, either in the form of a teen-only room or a larger teen-only center. And the Clubs are open long hours after school and over the summer months, allowing the teens to attend at the times that are best for them.

Clubs are also staffed in a way that provides positive adult supports for youth. Almost all of the Clubs in our study had at least one staff person whose time was devoted specifically to working with teens, and all of the Clubs had several staff who interacted with teens on a regular basis. In addition, Clubs' array of programming is intended to attract youth with a variety of interests and expose them to new and diverse activities that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to experience.

Teens rated the Club safer in comparison to other places where they spend time. Among youth who completed the final survey, 79 percent rated the level of safety at the Club as 8 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the most favorable. By comparison, only 54 percent rated the safety of their school this favorably, and only 38 percent had a rating that high for the neighborhood surrounding the Club. Teens describe the Clubs as providing an important space for them, where they can comfortably hang out and stay away from unhealthy choices and negative peer pressure.

Teens reported participating in a wide range of activities at the Clubs and getting involved in leadership roles. Among those who had been to the Club in the past four months, over half (56 percent) reported participating in either four or five different categories of activities (informal activities, athletic programs, academic programs, other formal activities, and paid and volunteer work). Among their activities, about three quarters reported using technology such as computers, video or digital music for fun (74 percent) or for schoolwork (71 percent); about two thirds reported playing sports (68 percent); 46 percent reported doing arts and crafts activities; a third (33 percent) attended a class in drama, dance or performing arts; and about a third (36 percent) reported participating in specific leadership programming. In addition, 82 percent of those who had been to the Club in the past year reported participating in at least one leadership role at the Club (such as helping in the office, serving on a youth council or leading an activity) during that time, and half participated in three or more such roles.

Teens also reported receiving positive opportunities at the Club and high levels of support from their peers. Almost all of the youth said there was at least one supportive peer (93 percent) at the Club, and that the Club was a place where there was peer cooperation (95 percent). The youth also reported that the Club was a place where there were opportunities to develop skills (90 percent), where they had fun (91 percent) and where they felt a sense of belonging (91 percent).

Youth and staff agreed that the positive adult/youth relationships at the Club were crucial for involving teens and imparting the important messages the Club strives to distill for youth. Almost all of the teens (96 percent) said there was at least one supportive adult at the Club and that at least one adult there was setting high expectations for them (96 percent). Staff and youth described the Club as a place where the staff build relationships, and said that those individual relationships create the bridge to programming; to conversations about character, school and healthy lifestyles; and to opportunities for staff to serve as role models. In our interviews, Club staff described how they support youth's positive development in the three outcome areas by paying attention to youth, being there to support them, and providing both formal and informal opportunities for activities and interactions with peers and other staff. Teens similarly described the importance of the relationships with staff for learning and positive development at the Club. And both staff and youth perceived the staff as accessible and approachable.

The Benefits of Participation: More Than the Sum of Clubs' Programmatic Parts

P/PV's 2005 review of evaluations of discrete programs at the Boys & Girls Club suggested that Clubs' implementation of focused programming has shown promising results in different areas, such as career development, delinquency prevention and academic success.⁸ Most of the prior evaluations of Clubs were limited to understanding the outcomes of those discrete programs, however, and did not take into account the larger way in which the Club experiences—the staff, the place to hang out and the multitude of opportunities—might influence a positive trajectory for youth. Thus, at the heart of this study was the effort to look at participation in the Club as a whole and learn more about the ways in which teens' experiences and exposure to the range of Club activities, staff supports and opportunities might promote healthy development, particularly during the transition from middle to high school—when many youth, particularly minorities, disengage from school and positive activities.

Analyses of the relationships between participation and outcomes indicate that “more is better.” The first goal of our analyses was to understand whether teens who were more highly engaged in the Clubs, in terms of their frequency of attendance, fared better than their counterparts who did not participate as much. The results of the analyses show that more time spent going to the Clubs over the 30-month evaluation period was linked to positive change in each of the three broad outcome areas tracked by the longitudinal evaluation.⁹ These include good character and citizenship, academic success and healthy lifestyles:

1. Good Character and Citizenship Outcomes. We examined eight outcomes and found significant relationships between participation and change in four of them. Youth who came to the Club with greater frequency were more likely to report:

- Higher levels of *community service* involvement,
- Increased levels of *integrity* (knowing right from wrong),
- Decreased levels of *shyness*, and
- Decreased levels of *aggression*.

2. Academic Success Outcomes. In this area, we also examined eight outcomes¹⁰ and found significant relationships between participation and change in three. Youth who came to the Club with greater frequency were more likely to report:

- Decreased number of times *skipping school*,
- Increased *academic confidence*, and
- Increased *school effort*.

3. Healthy Lifestyles Outcomes. We examined 15 outcomes in this area and found significant relationships between participation and change in 8 of them. Youth who came to the Club more frequently reported:

- Increased levels of *future connectedness* (how much youth think about their future and how their current activities help them prepare for the future),
- Decreased numbers of *negative peers* as friends,
- Decreased number of times *stopped by the police*, and
- Lower likelihood of starting to *carry a weapon*, *smoke cigarettes*, *drink alcohol*, *smoke marijuana* and have *sexual intercourse*.

The qualitative data bolster these findings by providing insights from youth and staff about the practices and strategies that support the influence of the Club, as a whole, on the youth in each of these outcome areas. Interviewed staff and the teens spoke about the importance of the Club environment, the safe place it provides and the role of interactions with supportive adults and peers as crucial—and, in their view, more important than programming—in helping promote teens' positive development.

The Clubs also serve as a stable, familiar environment for teens, a role that may be particularly crucial as they transition to new schools and have to adjust to a new set of teachers, coaches and other adults in their school lives. The youth in this study who went to the Clubs with more frequency tended to show improvements in many of the areas in which teens typically decline as they transition from middle to high school. The increases in positive attitudes toward school that are related to participation in Clubs come at a particularly vulnerable time for adolescents when commitment to school and sense of academic competence typically decline steeply, especially for young people in resource-poor neighborhoods.¹¹

Additional exploration of the data suggest that setting minimum participation goals of roughly between 52 and 104 days per year for teens, over a period of two years, may help Clubs achieve the positive results found in this study. In addition to learning whether more is better, we wanted to understand whether certain minimum levels of attendance were most highly related to significant positive outcomes. This information could be useful in establishing benchmarks for teen participation—a topic of particular interest to Club staff—and is also useful for other researchers and practitioners concerned with understanding how out-of-school-time programs can best support healthy development for teens.

Boys & Girls Clubs seek to provide expectations in terms of days attended per year, so we tracked outcomes in relation to frequency of days attended. We looked at 52, 122, 244 and 366 days attended over the 30-month period, which translates roughly to every other week, once a week, twice a week and three or more times a week. Table 1 on the next page summarizes our analyses comparing changes on outcomes between the baseline (Winter 2006) and final (Spring 2008) surveys for youth whose attendance levels in the Clubs varied accordingly.

These findings suggest that setting a target of 122 to 244 days of attendance over a 30-month period fosters a level of engagement that may be most likely to promote positive outcomes, particularly in the healthy lifestyles area. These rates over 30 months translate roughly to a participation level of 52 to 104 days per year. It is important to note that attending the Clubs more frequently than the established minimum can—and in most cases does—continue to correspond to greater change on outcomes; these were the minimum levels that we both tested and found significant.¹²

Implications for Serving Teens in Out-Of-School-Time Programs

In addition to the specific findings in this evaluation about the strategies and achievements of Boys & Girls Clubs, several important lessons about serving teens effectively during the out-of-school-time hours emerged from the qualitative and quantitative data gathered for the study. These lessons apply to Clubs as well as to other organizations that are striving to fill the needs of teens in low-income communities.

Providing a safe, supportive and engaging environment matters for all ages in out-of-school-time programs. But it matters more for keeping teens—who “vote with their feet”—involved. Funders, policymakers and practitioners are all interested in successful strategies for recruiting and retaining older youth in positive activities during the out-of-school-time hours. The findings from this evaluation echo and validate other research about what must be in place to attract and sustain teens’ participation in out-of-school-time programs: a variety of meaningful activities to engage youth’s interests; accessible places that are attractive and feel different for teens; and safe places where they can interact with their friends.¹³

Programs, such as Clubs, that are successfully providing crucial supports and opportunities to older youth need to carefully construct their approach for teens. Interesting programming is important, but it must be developed in a way that corresponds to the specific and changing interests and needs of the teen population served. Strong adult/youth relationships are also essential, but gaining the trust of teens takes time and attention on the part of staff before they are in a position to be able to really help and support teens. Teens also are more willing to engage in programs where their friends are, where they have time to hang out and where there are opportunities for them to engage in meaningful activities, such as leadership roles. In this study, teens who found these supports and opportunities at their Clubs participated with the most frequency.

Executive Summary Table 1
Minimum Level of Club Attendance Over 30-Month Period Associated with Significant Positive Change in Outcomes

Outcome	Level of Club Attendance			
	Attend 52 Days	Attend 122 Days	Attend 244 Days	Attend 366 Days
Increased levels of <i>school effort</i>	X			
Increased levels of <i>academic confidence</i>	X			
Increased levels of <i>integrity</i>	X			
Higher levels of <i>community service involvement</i>	X			
Increased levels of <i>future connectedness</i>	X			
Lower likelihood of starting to <i>smoke marijuana</i>	X			
Decreased levels of <i>aggression</i>		X		
Decreased levels of <i>shyness</i>		X		
Lower likelihood of starting to <i>carry a weapon</i>		X		
Decreased number of times <i>stopped by the police</i>		X		
Lower likelihood of starting to <i>drink alcohol</i>		X		
Lower likelihood of starting to <i>smoke cigarettes</i>		X		
Decreased number of times <i>skipping school</i>			X	
Lower likelihood of starting to <i>have sexual intercourse</i>			X	
Decreased number of <i>negative peers</i> as friends				X

Note: Results presented in the table are from a series of analyses with the number of days attended from October 2005 through March 2008 as predictor, controlling for demographics, Winter 2006 level on the specified outcome, academic risk, delinquency risk, five variables that were predictors of participation and dummy variables for each Club. The X in the box indicates the lowest level of participation tested at which we saw a statistically significant difference on the outcome variable of interest. N = 322.

The teens and staff we interviewed discussed the importance of these strategies for supporting their positive and healthy development.

Funders and out-of-school-time programs should recognize that changes in outcomes take time to develop. Thus, they should be cautious when establishing goals for teen participation levels that may be too low, particularly when trying to achieve the type of broad outcomes examined in this study.

Studies of out-of-school-time programs have found that outcomes take time, and often do not become evident until a youth has participated for more than 12 months, or even over several years.¹⁴ Our findings echo these results.

In this evaluation, though we were able to make suggestions based on positive associations found between various levels of attendance and outcomes, the strongest finding was that “more is better.” It is important to note that, among the outcomes we assessed, it is possible that even more time in Clubs would have been related to additional positive change. The outcomes that showed positive change at the lower level of attendance are primarily self-perceptions of attitudes, while the outcomes associated with change at the higher level of participation tend to be reports of less risky behaviors, changes that typically take more time to achieve. Finally, an important driver of positive outcomes for teens, one that is not captured wholly by frequency, may be the teens’ continued connection to positive places and relationships. Even when they are not physically showing up on a regular basis, teens feel connected to Clubs and believe they can go back.

Thus, the field should be cautious in setting attendance benchmarks that may be too low, or setting benchmarks without considering the bigger picture of what programs are offering teens. The levels of attendance and their associations with positive change in outcomes are offered in this study as a starting point for Clubs and other programs to take into account as they examine what outcomes they hope to achieve and how.

As important as Clubs are in teens’ lives, it is also clear that Clubs may be most appropriately one piece of teens’ extended learning environment, offering a foundation of support amidst the other things that youth do. As reported by many of the teens, Clubs were not the sole out-of-school-time activity they were involved in. The Clubs’ flexible attendance policies and the fact that they are open well into the evenings allowed teens to do other things and still go to the Clubs as they needed and wanted. This meant that teens could expand their opportunities outside of the Clubs, and yet they could find safe places and supportive staff that welcomed them when they returned. Many youth who did other activities still felt connected to Clubs, indicating that the Club was their “main thing.”

Creating this type of welcoming environment may be one of the ways that the Clubs become and stay such an important part of youth’s lives. The youth, as they become teens, want to and should begin to engage in other out-of-school-time activities. Yet, they also want to return and connect and keep the Clubs and their staff as a support, particularly as they are transitioning to new schools and going through other changes in their lives. The flexibility the Clubs offer teens provides a crucial support the youth need to stay connected and healthy. This is an important part of Club culture that appears to attract and retain teens and that others should consider as they attempt to build programs that are successful for teens.

Final Thoughts

P/PV’s earlier review of 20 years of research on Clubs found positive outcomes related to career development, delinquency prevention and academic achievement that resulted from implementation of specific discrete programs at the Clubs.¹⁵ At the same time, the review indicated that the potential for Clubs to make a difference in youth’s lives had not been fully tested by those evaluations of Clubs’ myriad discrete programs. Targeted programs have their own mechanisms for improving youth outcomes. However, the Clubs’ overall

approach to working with young people and connecting them to the Clubs and staff was revealed as also critically important. In essence, the discrete programs are not happening in a vacuum; they are part of the larger fabric of the whole Club experience, and the findings from those discrete programs' evaluations did not necessarily tell the whole Club story.

The data gathered for this longitudinal evaluation have added to what was learned from these past studies. The findings help explain the ways in which the Club “as a whole,” including its overall environment and the supportive adult staff, promotes engagement and positive outcomes for teens. Beyond its formal program offerings—designed to promote good character and citizenship, academic success and healthy lifestyles—the Club’s larger approach to serving teens is crucial in helping youth make positive choices in all three of these areas.

Endnotes

- 1 The first report describes findings and themes from across prior studies of Clubs—primarily studies of discrete programs provided by Clubs. See Arbretton, Amy, Jessica Sheldon and Carla Herrera. 2005. *Beyond Safe Havens: A Review and Synthesis of 20 Years of Research on Boys & Girls Clubs*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures. The second report examines factors that help explain higher rates of teen participation in Clubs over a 17-month period. See Arbretton, Amy, Molly Bradshaw, Rachel Metz and Jessica Sheldon, with Sarah Pepper. 2008. *More Time for Teens: Understanding Teen Participation—Frequency, Intensity and Duration—In Boys & Girls Clubs*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures. Both reports are available at www.ppv.org.
- 2 The Clubs are: Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston, Charlestown Boys & Girls Club; Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County, Marti Huizenga Boys & Girls Club; Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Fort Worth, Martin Branch; Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Fort Worth, Panther Branch; Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee, Mary Ryan Boys & Girls Club; Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater San Diego, Linda Vista Club; Boys & Girls Clubs of Omaha, South Omaha Boys & Girls Club; Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco, Columbia Park; Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester; West End House Boys & Girls Clubs of Allston/Brighton. At each of the Clubs, staff were asked to recruit 50 seventh- and eighth-grade Club members to participate in the two-and-a-half-year study. In order to participate, a parent or guardian had to grant written permission and youth had to sign an assent form. Between 27 and 50 seventh- and eighth-grade youth completed the baseline survey at each Club for a total of 432 study participants across the 10 Clubs. Club staff identified and surveyed youth who participated regularly as well as those who attended less frequently. After the Spring 2008 survey, 10 youth who had been surveyed at baseline were dropped from the evaluation when new data determined they had been in sixth grade at the start of the study.
- 3 See National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. 1999. *Risks and Opportunities: Synthesis of Studies on Adolescence*. Michele D. Kikpke (ed.). Forum on Adolescence. Board on Children, Youth and Families. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. See also Horwitz, Amanda and Jason Snipes. 2008. *Supporting Successful Transitions to High School: Research Brief, the Council of the Great City Schools*. Washington, DC: Council of the Great City Schools. See also Grossman, Jean Baldwin and Siobhan M. Cooney. 2009. *Paving the Way for Success in High School and Beyond: The Importance of Preparing Middle School Students for the Transition to Ninth Grade*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.
- 4 The teen populations in each of these Clubs ranged from about 30 to about 140 teens served daily. This represented from 18 to 44 percent of the total population reported served daily at the 10 study Clubs, with an average of 26 percent. Across all Clubs nationally, Boys & Girls Clubs of America reports that 32 percent of participants are teens ages 13 to 18 (see www.bgca.org), a slightly higher figure than reported by the 10 Clubs in this study.
- 5 Two additional factors worked against the possibility of implementing an experimental research design. As of the start date of the evaluation (2005), Clubs were operating in most low-income communities and neighborhoods in the country, creating a challenge to finding comparison cities or communities where there are not Clubs and where the communities are similar to those with Clubs. In addition, the purpose of the study is to examine the role of the whole Club experience; thus, although studies of particular programs within the Club might provide opportunities for comparison groups of other Club youth who do not take part in a specific activity, that was not feasible for this study.
- 6 Respondents were all contacted by telephone and asked to complete the survey over the phone.
- 7 Our analyses controlled for confounding variables that were also related to higher levels of attendance. For additional information, please see Appendix E of the full report.
- 8 See Arbretton et al., *Beyond Safe Havens*, for details of this review.
- 9 The findings summarized here and presented in detail in the full report—that the Clubs are keeping teens involved and that teens are experiencing the types of meaningful supports and opportunities at the Clubs that research has shown are important for healthy development—suggest that Clubs have had some bearing on the teens’ positive trajectory. However, because it was not possible for our study to include a comparison group, given that Clubs serve all youth, it cannot be firmly concluded that the positive changes for youth who participated with greater frequency are any different from what might be expected had they not been going to the Clubs.
- 10 A ninth outcome of interest, on-time grade progression, could not be examined in relationship to participation due to the small number of youth (12 youth, or 4 percent) who reported that they were held back a grade over the study period.
- 11 Halpern, Robert. 2005. *Confronting the Big Lie: The Need to Reframe Expectations of After-School Programs*. Partnership for After-School Education.
- 12 In 11 of the 15 cases where the relationship between participation and the outcome was found to be significant, the relationship between frequency of attendance and the outcome appears to be linear. That is, each increase in days of attendance was associated with greater change on the outcome (the more a teen attended, the more he/she benefited). For four outcomes—confident in ability in school, aggression, number of times initiating sex and negative peers—no linear relationship was found between days attended and the outcome; however, there was a threshold, or cut-point, below which no association was evident. That is, if a youth did not attend enough days, he or she did not show positive change in that outcome.
- 13 Lauver, Sherry, Priscilla M.D. Little and Heather B. Weiss. 2004. *Moving Beyond the Barriers: Attracting and Sustaining Youth Participation in Out-of-School-Time Programs*. Harvard Family Research Project. Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation, 6, July.

14 See Huang, D. et al. 2000. *A Decade of Results: The Impact of the L.A.'s BEST After-School Enrichment Program on Subsequent Student Achievement and Performance*. Los Angeles: UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. See also Walker, Karen E. and Amy J. A. Arbreton. 2004. *After-School Pursuits: An Evaluation of Outcomes in the San Francisco Beacon Initiative*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

15 See Arbreton et al., *Beyond Safe Havens*, for details of this review.



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